

DOC HASTINGS, WA
CHAIRMAN
DON YOUNG, AK
JOHN J. DUNCAN, JR., TN
LOUIE GOHMERT, TX
ROB BISHOP, UT
DOUG LAMBORN, CO
ROBERT J. WITTMAN, VA
PAUL C. BROUN, GA
JOHN FLEMING, LA
MIKE COFFMAN, CO
TOM MCCLINTOCK, CA
GLENN THOMPSON, PA
JEFF DENHAM, CA
DAN BENISHEK, MI
DAVID RIVERA, FL
JEFF DUNCAN, SC
SCOTT R. TIPTON, CO
PAUL A. GOSAR, AZ
RAÚL R. LABRADOR, ID
KRISTI L. NOEM, SD
STEVE SOUTHERLAND II, FL
BILL FLORES, TX
ANDY HARRIS, MD
JEFFREY M. LANDRY, LA
CHARLES J. "CHUCK" FLEISCHMANN, TN
JON RUNYAN, NJ
BILL JOHNSON, OH

TODD YOUNG
CHIEF OF STAFF

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources
Washington, DC 20515

EDWARD J. MARKEY, MA
RANKING DEMOCRATIC MEMBER
DALE E. KILDEE, MI
PETER A. DEFazio, OR
ENI F.H. FALCOMAVAEGA, AS
FRANK PALLONE, JR., NJ
GRACE F. NAPOLITANO, CA
RUSH D. HOLT, NJ
RAÚL M. GRIJALVA, AZ
MADELEINE Z. BORDALLO, GU
JIM COSTA, CA
DAN BOREN, OK
GREGORIO KILLI CAMACHO SABLÁN, CNMI
MARTIN HEINRICH, NM
BEN RAY LUJÁN, NM
DONNA M. CHRISTENSEN, VI
JOHN P. SARBANES, MD
BETTY SUTTON, OH
NIKI TSONGAS, MA
PEDRO R. PIERLUISI, PR
JOHN GARAMENDI, CA
COLLEEN W. HANABUSA, HI

JEFFREY DUNCAN
DEMOCRATIC STAFF DIRECTOR

Statement By
The Honorable Don Young
Acting Chairman
Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife, Oceans and Insular Affairs
At the Legislative Hearing on
H.R. 295, H.R. 670, H.R. 991, H.R. 1160 AND H.R. 1670
May 12, 2011

The Subcommittee will come to order. The Chairman notes the presence of a quorum.

Good morning. Today the Subcommittee will hear testimony on five legislative proposals. The first two bills are measures that I have introduced, let me briefly explain them.

H.R. 295 would amend the Hydrographic Services Improvement Act to authorize hydrographic surveys and Continental Shelf mapping of the Arctic region. The Arctic region lacks up-to-date survey data, with the last major hydrographic survey activity having occurred more than 60 years ago, after World War II. H.R. 295 is an effort to move this process forward, I understand the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration will testify that they have this authority; however, I believe this bill is necessary to emphasize the need for the agency to collect hydrographic data and provide hydrographic services in the Arctic region.

We are also hearing testimony today on H.R. 991. This legislation would allow 41 hunters to import their polar bear trophies into the U.S. after paying the required permit fee.

Prior to the listing of the polar bear on the Endangered Species Act, hunters could hunt a polar bear from an approved Canadian polar bear population and import their trophy into the U.S. From 1997 through 2008, 969 hunters hunted in Canada bringing in \$969,000 in permit fees which funds conservation activities for the shared U.S. - Russia polar bear population. Once the bear was listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act and depleted under the Marine Mammal Protection Act, hunters were prohibited from importing legally harvested polar bear trophies.

I want to stress that the prohibition on bringing these trophies into the U.S. is not providing any conservation value to the Canadian polar bear populations. The intent of H.R. 991 is to allow only those legally taken trophies to be imported into the U.S. and the permit fee to fund conservation activities for the shared U.S.-Russia polar bear population, which, I might add, does not get funding from any other sources.

There are detractors today, as there were in 1994, who are opposed to amending the Marine Mammal Protection Act to allow for the importation of polar bear trophies from Canada and refer to the language as a "loophole".

There will always be a sector of the population that believes we should not kill animals; however, we need to keep in mind that there are still areas of the world that rely on the natural resources around them and still subsist on these resources. Some may like to believe that if U.S. hunters are prohibited from importing their trophies into the U.S., polar bear hunting will end. That is far from the truth.

It is important to remember that these polar bear sport hunts in Canada support small, remote Native villages in Canada. Hunters pay up to \$50,000 for the hunt itself and will leave with only the hide of the bear. The Native village benefits again from the hunt by retaining all of the meat from the taken bear.

Most of the Canadian polar bear populations are healthy and well managed. While the world-wide polar bear population is listed as threatened, its population numbers are currently healthy with an estimated population of 23,000 bears. Sport hunting activities provide important incentives and support remote Native villages and important conservation programs in Canada, the U.S. and Russia.

Finally, let me again be clear there is no conservation value in a dead bear that is held in cold storage in Canada. Those who legally hunted and harvested polar bears fully complied with all U.S. and Canadian laws in place at the time. In most instances, these hunts were years in the planning and savings were set-aside to book this "once in a lifetime experience".

I will now move on to the next bill, our distinguished Ranking Member, Mr. Sablan, sponsored H.R. 670, a bill which will give the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands jurisdiction over submerged lands out to 3 nautical miles. After reading the history on this issue, the legislation seems long overdue, the territories of Guam, American Samoa and the U.S. Virgin Islands have had jurisdiction over their submerged lands out to 3 nautical miles since 1974. It is time for the Mariana Islands to have this same authority.

The Subcommittee will also hear testimony on H. R. 1160, the McKinney Lake National Fish Hatchery Conveyance Act. This proposal introduced by our colleague from North Carolina, Congressman Larry Kissell, would transfer title to 422 acres of land, including 23 production ponds, from the Fish and Wildlife Service to the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission.

The Commission has been effectively managing this property since 1998 under a Memorandum of Understanding with the Service and they have been providing anglers with 150,000 channel catfish each year. In fact, this Subcommittee has previously conveyed ten National Fish hatcheries to States and municipalities and there are currently 11 additional hatcheries which are owned by the federal government but managed by various states.

Finally, last but certainly not least, we will hear testimony on H. R. 1670, the Sikes Act Amendments Act. This bill introduced by the distinguished former Chairwoman of this Subcommittee, my good friend, Congresswoman Madeleine Bordallo, which was referred to both this Committee and House Armed Services. Under this measure, 47 State-owned Army National Guard installations would be required to implement an Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan as articulated in the Sikes Act of 1960 in coordination with the Department of Defense and the Fish and Wildlife Service.

I understand that many of these State-owned facilities, including the Stewart River Training Site in my Congressional District, have already implemented comprehensive natural resource plans. Nevertheless, this requirement will provide for a uniform system and will give certain assurances to State installation commanders as to how they can utilize their training lands in the future.

I look forward to hearing the testimony on these proposals. I am now pleased to recognize our Ranking Democratic Member from the Commonwealth of Northern Marianas, Congressman Sablan, for any statement he would like to make.